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White Coats, White Hoods:

The Medical Politics of the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s America

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SUMMARY: This article explores the medical politics of the second iteration of Ku Klux Klan in the United States. As eugenics gained a foothold in America at the turn of the twentieth century, the Klan embraced the latest in scientific racism to lend legitimacy to their cultural, political, and economic goals of white supremacy. Klan physicians in particular held a vested interest preserving a racialized medical hierarchy and promoting reproductive surveillance in public health. By the 1920s, a symbiotic relationship developed between the organization and the medical profession. The Klan relied on its member physicians to lend professional respectability to the organization and scientific legitimacy to its agenda. In turn, affiliation with the Klan gave physicians an opportunity for career advancement and provided the muscle to intimidate professional and political opponents.

KEYWORDS: Ku Klux Klan, reproductive surveillance, physicians, Colorado, eugenics, public health, medical politics

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On the night of January 6, 1925, six men disguised as police officers burst into the Southard Hotel in downtown Denver. The men were searching for Keith Boehm, a high school student whose parents owned the hotel. When they found Boehm hiding in his mother's room, the men abducted the nineteen-year-old by force and drove him two blocks southwest to the medical office of Dr. John Galen Locke.¹ There, his captors disrobed the teenager while Dr. Locke pulled out a scalpel and threatened to perform a vasectomy on Boehm unless he agreed to marry May Nash, a young woman who claimed to be pregnant with his child. Boehm later testified, "I got scared and began to cry, and I said I would marry her."² Dr. Locke then called in the young woman and a local preacher, and the two were married right there in the physician's office.

In the aftermath of this "shotgun wedding," Boehm's family sought an annulment through Denver's juvenile court. After hearing the young man's story, the judge issued an arrest warrant for Dr. Locke and his associates, charging them with conspiracy and kidnapping. The case became an overnight sensation, largely because the doctor at the center of the kidnapping plot—the man who wielded the scalpel against Keith Boehm—was no ordinary physician. Dr. John Galen Locke was also the grand dragon of the Colorado Realm of the Ku Klux Klan. The

¹ The Southard Hotel was located at 1532 Glenarm Place, and Dr. Locke's office was at 1345 Glenarm Place, *Denver Directory and Classified Buyers Guide* (Denver: Gazetteer, 1923), 253, 348.

² "Colorado Capital in Dragon's Shadow," *Wausau Daily Herald*, February 24, 1925, 13; "In Kidnaping," *Waco News Tribune*, January 18, 1925, 26; "Klan Dragon Is Arrested," *Casper Star-Tribune*, January 9, 1925, 1.

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physician later told reporters that as leader of the KKK, it was his solemn duty to see to it that Boehm, a fellow Klan member, should do “the manly thing.”³

The “Klan Kidnapping Case,” as it became known in the press, is a salient example of how the Colorado Klan, under the leadership of Dr. Locke, wielded its medical authority to enforce white supremacist ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality. The mission of the organization, as one Colorado Klan newspaper editorialized, was “to help bring about a more healthful condition in the community.”⁴ A healthy community, as imagined by the Klan, could come to fruition only through a racialized medical hierarchy, the regulation of bodies through public health, and, if needed, extralegal enforcement. Throughout the 1920s, as the Klan came to dominate local and state government, Dr. Locke and his colleagues attempted to fundamentally reshape Colorado’s medical and public health landscape to better reflect the scientific racism and reproductive politics of the Klan, and to prosecute any individuals who refused to toe the line.

The link between the profession of medicine and the Ku Klux Klan was not confined to Colorado. In 1906 a group of Atlanta physicians proposed that the Klan should be in charge of conducting trials against Black men accused of rape. Upon a guilty verdict, a physician would

³ “K.K.K. Force Member to Right a Wrong,” *Independent-Record*, January 9, 1925, 6. The case received national attention from the press but little coverage in Denver newspapers. Many Colorado papers were sympathetic to the Klan, which may explain the sparse coverage. The 1920s Klan had both public and covert components to it. As such, this study relies on extensive out-of-state newspaper coverage of Klan activities, anti-Klan publications, and archival collections of Klan opponents such as Ben B. Lindsey. It also makes use of legal documents, medical journals, public Klan material, Klan membership rosters, and archival collections of Klan members such as Dr. Minnie Love and Laurena Senter.

⁴ “Klan Spirit Survives Opposition,” *Rocky Mountain American* 1, no. 1 (January 30, 1925).

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then perform a castration, making it “an event the ‘patient’ would never forget.”⁵ Over time, the physicians argued, white America would come to prefer the tidiness of medical punishments over the unruliness of mob lynchings. Threats of castrations for Black men in Atlanta and vasectomies for white men in Denver demonstrate the ideology underlining much of the medical politics of the Klan: reproductive surveillance.⁶ In turn-of-the-century America, many physicians formulated a scientific and moral philosophy of reproduction that drew connections between eugenics, contraception, abortion, and human sexuality. I use the term “reproductive surveillance” to characterize how physicians rhetorically tied these concepts together to advocate

⁵ “Castration Instead of Lynching,” *Atlanta Journal–Record of Medicine* 8 (October 1906): 457. When this article was published in 1906, the Klan was in a period of dormancy, with the first iteration of the organization largely disbanded by 1877. With the publication of Thomas Dixon’s 1905 book *The Clansman*, there was renewed interest in the organization, and it is unclear if smaller independent Klan groups existed during this period. Thomas Dixon Jr., *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1905).

⁶ Punitive castration for Black men has a long history in America. Diane Somerville argues it was a common form of punishment for enslaved men accused of rape or noncompliance. Following the Civil War, lynch mobs castrated Black men accused of raping or harassing white women. The Atlanta example demonstrates how some physicians sought to medicalize this practice under the court system. At the same time, other physicians began advocating for a new punitive/therapeutic surgery: the eugenic vasectomy. Proponents argued that the vasectomy was a more humane procedure because it had none of the “unsexing” effects of castration. The Klan’s endorsement of castration for Black men and vasectomies for white men demonstrates a violent racial distinction in their reproductive surveillance ideology. Diane Miller Somerville, “The Devil’s Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South,” in *Rape, Race, and Castration in Slave Law in the Colonial and Early South*, ed. Catherine Clinton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 74–83; Angela Gugliotta, “‘Dr. Sharp with His Little Knife’: Therapeutic and Punitive Origins of Eugenic Vasectomy—Indiana, 1892–1921,” *J. Hist. Med. & Allied Sci.* 53, no. 4 (October 1998): 371–406; Gregory Michael Dorr, “Defective or Disabled? Race, Medicine, and Eugenics in Progressive Era Virginia and Alabama,” *J. Gilded Age Progressive Era* 5, no. 4 (2006): 359–92.

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for social and legislative policies designed to medically police bodies.⁷ As the Denver and Atlanta cases highlight, reproductive surveillance became particularly important for the Ku Klux Klan, who believed that upholding white supremacy required the strict moral and medical regulation of sexuality in the United States.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, as KKK chapters spread across the country, its leadership, and many of its members, held a vested interest in medicine and public health, yet the medical politics of the Klan has largely gone unexplored by historians. Previous studies on the Klan have focused on the economic, social, and political aspects of the organization, with early work painting the Klan as decidedly working class and antimodern.⁸

⁷ Jacqueline D. Antonovich, “Medical Frontiers: Women Physicians and the Politics and Practice of Medicine in the American West, 1870–1930” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2018).

⁸ The historiography on the second iteration of the KKK can be divided into three strands. The earliest scholarship, beginning in the 1950s, argued that the Klan was made up of working-class men who were not only racist but antimodern and antiscience. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform, from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage, 1955); Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). Beginning in the 1980s, a second interpretation of the Klan emerged—one that focused on what David Horowitz calls the Klan’s “civic populism”—an effort to embrace modernity through efficient government. David A. Horowitz, “The Normality of Extremism: The Ku Klux Klan Revisited,” *Society* 35, no. 6 (September 1998): 71–77; Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Shawn Lay, ed. *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Recent scholarship has examined the organization as a mainstream social movement that cut across gender and class lines. Works include Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Kelly J. Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915–1930*, repr. ed. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017); Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

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Recent scholarship has pushed back on this assertion, uncovering the organization's cross-class coalition and highlighting its embrace of modernity through its advocacy of social reform, government efficiency, and civic populism. As historian David Horowitz argues, these issues were inseparable from the group's campaigns of racial subjugation.⁹ This link is unequivocal when examining the organization's interest in medicine and public health. Klan membership included numerous physicians, nurses, and public health reformers who sought to enforce white supremacy within the medical professions and to influence public health policy to better reflect the Klan's racial and reproductive ideologies.

This advocacy was certainly not unique to the Klan. Historians of medicine have shown how diverse groups in American society adopted facets of scientific racism, especially eugenics, to champion various public health causes throughout the early twentieth century.¹⁰ Scholars have also explored the extensive role physicians played in medicalizing race.¹¹ Interrogating the

⁹ Horowitz, "Normality of Extremism" (n. 8), 77.

¹⁰ See Emily K. Abel, *Tuberculosis and the Politics of Exclusion: A History of Public Health and Migration to Los Angeles* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Miroslava Chávez-García, *States of Delinquency: Race and Science in the Making of California's Juvenile Justice System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

¹¹ See Rana A. Hogarth, *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018).

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medical politics of the Klan, however, exposes the symbiotic relationship that developed between the organization and the medical profession by the 1920s. The Klan, as an organization, relied on its member physicians to lend professional respectability to the organization and scientific legitimacy to its agenda. In turn, affiliation with the Klan gave physicians an opportunity for career advancement and provided the muscle (literally and figuratively) to intimidate professional and political opponents.

This article begins with an overview of the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan in early twentieth-century America. Scientific racism profoundly shaped the new Klan's perspectives on medicine and public health, and subsequently defined their views on reproductive rights and restrictions. As the organization spread beyond the borders of the American South, physicians, public health reformers, and others viewed the Klan as an effective tool in preserving a racialized medical hierarchy and promoting reproductive surveillance in public health. The article then presents Colorado as a microstudy to explore the extent the Klan influenced health policy and the profession of medicine. Although Klan chapters across the country manipulated the medico-political landscape with varying degrees of success, the Colorado Klan, with Dr. Locke and other prominent physicians in leadership positions, engineered an almost complete takeover of local and state governments. These physicians used their roles as medical authorities to advance a biopolitical framework for the state that focused on the surveillance of bodies based on medical racism and Protestant morality. The Colorado Klan's medical and public health efforts served an additional purpose beyond the ideological. Physicians in the organization sought to reorganize government institutions and reform health laws as a means to solidify their professional power and to oust their political enemies.

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The Ku Klux Klan, Scientific Racism, and Public Health

Founded in 1866 in response to Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan became the most powerful and violent vigilante group in the post–Civil War South. A secret society committed to upholding white supremacy, the KKK terrorized African Americans in the region through intimidation, lynching, and rape.¹² In 1870 and 1871, Congress passed the Enforcement Acts in an effort to quash the organization, but it was the federal government’s abrupt withdrawal from the South in 1877 that temporarily neutralized the Klan.¹³ The failure of Reconstruction empowered southern states to convert the de facto subjugation of African Americans through campaigns of terrorism into de jure racism through a series of Jim Crow laws, rendering the Ku Klux Klan unnecessary.

The Klan remained dormant until 1915, when a Methodist preacher named William Joseph Simmons decided to revive it. Inspired by the Lost Cause ideology popularized in Thomas Dixon’s 1905 book *The Clansman* and D. W. Griffith’s 1915 film *Birth of a Nation*, Simmons and a group of like-minded men reestablished the group in a ceremony atop Georgia’s Stone Mountain in November 1915.¹⁴ Dedicating itself to the “patriotic and chivalric work” of its predecessor, the second iteration of the Klan held the same anti-Black views but extended its

¹² Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

¹³ Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 174, 258.

¹⁴ Lost Cause ideology maintains that the Civil War was fought over states’ rights and denies the central role of slavery as the root cause of the conflict. The ideology also posits that the Confederacy fought against “Northern aggression” to protect its honorable way of life. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

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vitriol to include Roman Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and organized labor—a direct response to fears over increasing immigration to the United States and the communist revolution in Russia.¹⁵ While the earlier Klan was confined to the South and made up exclusively of male Democrats, this new version quickly became a national, mainstream movement that included both men and women, Republicans and Democrats, the working class and elites. Historians estimate that by the 1920s Klan membership exceeded four million people nationwide.¹⁶

The new Klan advanced a doctrine of “One Hundred Percent Americanism,” advocated for Protestant-based morals, and promoted legislation that promised the elimination of crime, vice, and corruption. The group underlined its new platform with the latest in scientific racism: eugenics.¹⁷ When Francis Galton coined the term in 1883, he postulated that differences in human intelligence and behavior were due to hereditary traits. Furthermore, he believed hereditary lines could be improved, and science was duty bound to work toward the perfection of

¹⁵ William Joseph Smith, *The Ku Klux Klan: Yesterday Today and Forever* (KKK, ca. 1916), 1–2.

¹⁶ For an overview of how the 1920s Klan became mainstream, see Gordon, *Second Coming of the KKK* (n. 8) and Felix Harcourt, *Ku Klux Kulture: America and the Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Scientific racism, historically associated with colonialism and white supremacy, is characterized as an endeavor to demonstrate the biological superiority of one race over another and serves to justify inequalities between races. Its early iterations include phrenology, craniology, and race typology. At the turn of the twentieth century, eugenics emerged as a new strand of scientific racism, as some eugenicists made hereditary arguments for racial superiority. Michael Yudell, *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 2–5. See also Robert Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014).

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humankind.¹⁸ By the turn of the twentieth century, eugenics became a widely accepted science, with various progressive groups championing a mix of positive eugenics (marriage laws, better baby contests) and negative eugenics (sterilizations of “feebleminded” populations).¹⁹ Scholars such as Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard took eugenic thinking even further, arguing that America was in decline due to the proliferation of not only the genetically unfit but the racially unfit.²⁰ Klan leaders took advantage of this discourse and used it to justify its anti-immigrant and anti-Black views. For example, Hiram Wesley Evans, the imperial wizard of the Klan in the 1920s, wrote not only that the “flood of inferior foreigners” had increased illiteracy and crime in the United States, but that their very presence had lowered the nation’s “health level” and “visibly menaced America by inheritable mental and moral deficiencies.”²¹ Although the imperial wizard gave economic and a cultural arguments for restricting immigration, he used eugenics to lend his claims a veneer of scientific legitimacy.

By the 1920s, eugenic thought flourished in the KKK. In 1923, *Hearst Magazine* exposed Lothrop Stoddard himself as a secret member of the Klan who advised leadership on the latest in

¹⁸ See Paul A. Lombardo, ed., *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, Bioethics and the Humanities (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Diane Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present*, The Control of Nature (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1995); and Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁹ Kline, *Building a Better Race* (n. 10), 23.

²⁰ MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry* (n. 8), 133.

²¹ *Dawn*, November 10, 1923; Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 65.

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eugenics and racial science.²² A historian by training, Stoddard wrote *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, in which he argued that nonwhite populations of the world would soon topple the established white hierarchy through unchecked population growth. Stoddard's influence on Klan leadership is clear. Speaking at a national meeting in 1924, imperial wizard Evans implored Klan members to curb the immigrant menace by supporting racial purity in American government: "The blood which produces human leadership must be protected from inferior blood."²³ The way to achieve this, Evans argued, was to install Klan members into positions of authority throughout the United States, a strategy that would become the cornerstone of the Klan's medico-political work by the 1920s. A pure America could be realized only through an enforcement of eugenics in public health policy, a focus on reproductive surveillance in legislation, and a preservation of a racial hierarchy in medicine, tasks best administered by the Klan.

The national office produced and distributed eugenic and racial science literature to chapters across the country and encouraged members to take control of medical facilities in their communities, involve themselves in local government, and spearhead public health reforms. In some chapters, this work was limited to the activism of individual actors, while other chapters mounted coordinated attacks to supplant city and state officials. The La Grande, Oregon, chapter of the KKK, for example, organized an attempt to take "complete control of local affairs," including installing a Klan city health officer, and making sure the Klan was represented in the

²² Yudell, *Race Unmasked* (n. 17), 42.

²³ "Sayings of Imperial Wizard," *Rocky Mountain American* 1, no. 1 (January 30, 1925); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

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Chamber of Commerce's Health and Sanitation committee.²⁴ In Anaheim, California, the Klan managed to get a member appointed as the city health officer and a Klan majority was installed on the Anaheim Board of Health.²⁵

A notable example of how the Klan attempted to exert its medical influence occurred in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1921. That year, the federal government unveiled plans to build a hospital in town for Black veterans and pledged that the facility would be administered by Black medical professionals. The racial stakes in the institutional drama that was about to unfold were unmistakable. African Americans believed that control of the federal hospital would not only mean improved treatment, but more sympathetic care for Black veterans. The new hospital was also an important employment opportunity for Black physicians and nurses. For white Alabamians, including KKK members, a Black-operated federal facility in the heart of the Jim Crow South was unthinkable. Several white politicians, reporters, and medical professionals demanded that the federal government change course and staff all key positions in the hospital with white physicians. Furthermore, because Alabama law forbade white female nurses from touching Black patients, they also proposed hiring white nurses but using Black maids for any physical contact with patients.²⁶

²⁴ Horowitz, "Normality of Extremism" (n. 8), 74.

²⁵ Christopher Cocoltchos, "The Invisible Empire and the Search for Orderly Community: The Ku Klux Klan in Anaheim, California," in Lay, *Invisible Empire in the West* (n. 8), 112.

²⁶ "Government to Erect Hospital at Tuskegee," *Florence Herald*, December 16, 1921, 7; "Tuskegee Gets Negro Hospital," *Birmingham News*, September 22, 1921, 8; Keith Wailoo, *Dying in the City of the Blues: Sickle Cell Anemia and the Politics of Race and Health* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 47.

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Tensions came to a head on the morning of July 3, 1923, when officials replaced a white woman hospital clerk with a Black man. When the new hire arrived, a medical officer handed him an envelope from the Klan. The letter inside warned, “If you value your welfare do not take this job but leave at once for parts from whence you came or suffer the consequences.” To make their point clear, the Klan staged a silent parade on the hospital grounds that same night.²⁷ Scholars who have explored this incident have pointed out the inconsistency of white supremacists fighting for an integrated hospital, but viewed through the lens of medical racism, the parameters of the fight come into focus.²⁸ Within an ideology that placed whiteness at the top of a scientific hierarchy, it was inconceivable that Black physicians lead a federally funded hospital or make medical decisions on behalf of the United States, even if the patient base was African American.

The Ku Klux Klan became so invested in preserving a racialized medical hierarchy that by 1923, the group turned its fundraising efforts to building its own hospitals. Chapters in Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, Texas, and Indiana all raised money for future sites, but only

²⁷ “Calhoun Back in Tuskegee at Government Hospital,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, July 31, 1923, 5; Lester A. Walton, “Southern Opinion on the Tuskegee Hospital,” *New Outlook* 135 (1923): 14–16; Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92–95.

²⁸ Glenn Feldman, *Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915–1949* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 54–55; Thomas J. Ward, *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 169–70.

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Texas and Indiana managed to complete construction.²⁹ Previous scholarship mentions Klan hospitals only briefly through a general discussion on Klan boosterism and charity.³⁰ Indeed, as part of the publicity surrounding fundraising efforts, the Klan hospital in Indiana pledged to admit all patients, regardless of race or religion. Just like the federal hospital in Tuskegee, however, patient demographics were not at issue; who ran the hospital was. Klan hospitals offered assurance to white Protestants that the “right people” would be in place to administer to their health, should they fall ill, and relieved their fear of “being born, being sick, and dying under the care of nuns.”³¹ Because they committed to hiring an Anglo-Saxon Protestant staff, Klan hospitals also became a way for white physicians to solidify their professional power within their communities.

²⁹ “Protestant Institutions,” *Wapanucka Press*, September 21, 1923, 5; “Work on Klan Hospital Will Begin August 1,” *Town Talk*, July 14, 1923, 1; “El Dorado Klan Will Erect Hospital,” *Times*, March 15, 1923, 1. The two hospitals that opened were in Kokomo, Indiana, and Kingsville, Texas. The Kingsville hospital was later sold to private interests, and the Kokomo hospital was eventually absorbed by the neighboring Catholic hospital, Sisters of St. Joseph. Norman Leroy Murphy, “The Relationship of the Methodist Church to the Ku Klux Klan in Texas, 1920–1928” (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1971); Allen Safiano, “Konclave in Kokomo’ Revisited,” *Historian* 50, no. 3 (May 1988): 334–44.

³⁰ Thomas Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 41; Leonard Joseph Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921–1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 105; Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 95.

³¹ Robert Coughlin, “Konclave in Kokomo,” in *The Aspirin Age, 1919–1941*, ed. Samuel Hopkins Adams, and Isabel Leighton (Mattituck, N.Y.: Amereon House, 1949), 109–10.

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The Klan and Reproductive Surveillance

The Klan's commitment to preserving a racial medical hierarchy was also tied to the organization's reproductive politics. As one Klan newspaper editorial argued, "To breed a stronger, healthier race; to improve the mentalities of future generations; to stimulate a more normal, vital condition in the home requires the introduction of the physician's knowledge of things sexual—eugenics, birth control, sterilization are in the doctor's province and nowhere else."³² This single sentence neatly outlines the Klan's philosophy of reproductive surveillance, articulating the connections between sexuality, eugenics, and contraception, and emphasizing the authority of the (white) physician to be the arbiter of reproductive rights and restrictions.

Throughout the 1920s, the Klan developed a fervent set of beliefs on sex, reproduction, abortion, and birth control. Like many Americans during this period, the Klan opposed abortion.³³ While the KKK newspaper the *Missouri Fraternalist* published several antiabortion editorials throughout the 1920s, other Klan chapters took extralegal action. In Beaumont, Texas, for example, Klan members tarred and feathered a local physician accused of performing the procedure.³⁴ The Klan also had strong opinions on birth control, particularly condemning its use among white Protestant couples. A New York Klan chapter, for example, publicized their "violent" opposition to birth control in the *New York Tribune*: "Every other race in the world is growing in numbers, while birth control represents a tendency on the part of the white race to

³² *Fraternalist*, December 9, 1926, 6.

³³ Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867–1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³⁴ Alexander, *Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (n. 30), 42.

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diminish its natural increase.”³⁵ Opposition to birth control within the Klan was not absolute. In her autobiography, birth control advocate Margaret Sanger recalls meeting with a women’s auxiliary branch of the Klan in New Jersey in 1926. Labeling the event as “one of the weirdest experiences” she ever had, Sanger describes the tension in the room while speaking before the group: “Never before had I looked into a sea of faces like these. I was sure that if I uttered one word, such as abortion, outside the usual vocabulary of these women they would go off into hysteria.”³⁶ Despite the hostility, Sanger believed her lecture was somewhat successful, writing that several of the women extended further invitations to come and speak to similar groups.

The Sanger event illustrates how instrumental women became in the public health and reproductive politics of the Klan. The 1920s Ku Klux Klan, unlike its predecessor, allowed women’s auxiliary chapters (WKKK). The WKKK was not dissimilar to many other women’s groups that emerged during the Progressive Era who focused on promoting nationalism and preserving the Protestant white family. The women’s Klan underlined their efforts with anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish activism, including promoting an economic boycott of all non-Protestant businesses. A note sent to a Denver female Klan leader illuminates this process: “Please remind our ladies,” it began, “that the Sun Drug Company with several drug stores in the city and Neusteter Clothing Company . . . are run by Jews.”³⁷ Although the tactics of female

³⁵ “Haywood to Organize for the Ku Klux Klan,” *New York Tribune*, November 27, 1922, 4.

³⁶ Margaret Sanger, *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography* (New York: Norton, 1938), 361, 366–67.

³⁷ Letter to Laurena Senter from Klanswoman #8716, Senter Family Papers (MSS WH988), Western History and Genealogy Center, Denver Public Library (hereinafter SFP/DPL).

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Klan members proved subtler than their male colleagues' use of violence, women of the KKK wielded a soft power that may have been more effective in regulating community behavior.³⁸

The WKKK platform also included promoting the health and welfare of women and children in their communities.³⁹ For example, while Laura Ford was an active member of the Dallas WKKK, she served on the city's board of health and volunteered for the Red Cross Auxiliary. Meanwhile, Dee Skiles of the same Dallas chapter was a member of the city's Council of Mothers. As part of the organization, Skiles volunteered to do house-to-house visitation in poor neighborhoods to convince immigrant mothers to bring their babies to public health centers to check for "undernourishment and adenoids, diseased tonsils, tubercular children, and sore eyes."⁴⁰ Women Klan members often worked with minority communities, but campaigns were framed around reducing disease, rather than any love for immigrant or nonwhite children. Providing public health services meant protecting white Protestant children from literal, as well as racial and eugenic, contagion. In advocating for a children's psychiatric institution in Oregon, for example, one WKKK newspaper argued, "The immediate results would be . . . greater progress for normal children who are now associated with the backward ones."⁴¹ Although the group may have wielded a soft power in monitoring intra-community behavior, the WKKK possessed an iron fist when it came to reproductive surveillance. Many of its leaders promoted

³⁸ Blee, *Women of the Klan* (n. 8), 125.

³⁹ Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 2–3.

⁴⁰ Laura Lee Mohsene, "'The Women—God Bless Them': Dallas Women and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Dallas, 2011), 76, 193.

⁴¹ "Klansmen Are Backing the Cause," *Western American*, March 24, 1923, 4.

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eugenic sterilization policies for “defective” Americans and the group’s “Imperial Lecturer,” Mrs. Lucien Trigg Davis, advocated for the death penalty for miscegenation, arguing that the practice was akin to committing “race murder.”⁴²

Although Klan chapters across the country implemented public health programs, advocated for racial medical hierarchies, and promoted reproductive surveillance policies with varying intensity, perhaps no other chapter had more medical influence on local and state government than the one in Denver, Colorado. There are no firm numbers on how many doctors and other health care workers belonged to the Denver Klan, but several prominent physicians held leadership positions in the organization, including Dr. John Galen Locke, the grand dragon of the Colorado Realm, and the man who wielded a scalpel against Keith Boehm.⁴³

The Medical Politics of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan

The reconstituted Klan took root in Colorado in the 1920s, just as thousands of other chapters formed in cities and towns across America. While historians estimate national membership at around four million, the Colorado Realm, which included chapters in Denver, Grand Junction, and Cañon City, claimed to have fifty thousand members, or 5 percent of the state’s population.

⁴² “Death Penalty Asked for White Race Degraders,” *Fraternalist*, December 18, 1924, 4.

⁴³ Robert Goldberg analyzed the membership roster of the Denver Klan. Based on a sample of 375 members, he found that 16 were physicians, with 3 holding leadership positions. My analysis of the WKKK membership roster has so far uncovered 5 women physicians and 3 nurses. Robert A. Goldberg, “Beneath the Hood and Robe: A Socioeconomic Analysis of Ku Klux Klan Membership in Denver, Colorado, 1921–1925,” *West. Hist. Quart.* 11, no. 2 (1980): 181–98; membership card file, box 37, SFP/DPL.

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The Denver chapter alone boasted of seventeen thousand members, making it the second largest chapter in the United States, behind Indianapolis.⁴⁴ Like many other western cities, Denver experienced exponential growth in the early twentieth century, with the population increasing by 20 percent between 1910 and 1920.⁴⁵ In response to the social and economic problems associated with the city's rapid growth, the Klan drew on the rhetoric of Protestant moralism and western populism to grow its membership. The public focus of the organization concentrated on prohibition, crime prevention, and political corruption, yet deep-seated racism and xenophobia underlined this agenda. Throughout the 1920s, Denver's ethnic newspapers documented Klan violence and bigotry, including assaults on Greek, Italian, and Black residents, and acts of intimidation against the city's Catholic and Jewish communities.⁴⁶

In many ways, the Colorado Klan was similar to other realms in the American West. Because of the distance from the national headquarters in Georgia, western realms felt a degree

⁴⁴ The Invisible Empire, the national designation of the Klan led by an Imperial Wizard, was divided into realms, usually a state or a territory, and headed by a grand dragon. WKKK leaders were headed by Excellent Commanders. Marylyn Griggs Riley, "Krazy Kool/Klean Kafe," box 2, FF37, SFP/DPL.

⁴⁵ In 1920, the population of Denver was 256,491. The census offers the following racial breakdown: native white, 212,024; nonnative white, 37,620; Black, 6,075; and "Indian, Chinese, Japanese," 772. There were approximately 37,748 Roman Catholics and 16,450 Jewish residents in the city. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium, Colorado* (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1924); Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8), 8.

⁴⁶ Denver's ethnic newspapers posed the most visible opposition to the Klan, documenting the organizations misdeeds and publishing op-eds denouncing the group. For an analysis of newspaper reports of Klan activity in Colorado, see Carolyn D. Tozier, "Ku Klux Klan: An Analysis of Its Treatment in Denver Newspapers, 1921–1925" (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, 1976).

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of independence, empowering grand dragons in the region to drive their own agendas. As historian Robert Goldberg explains, “The personality of the Grand Dragon, and the distraction of the Imperial Wizard, enabled Colorado Klansmen to develop their organization with a minimum of interference.”⁴⁷ Colorado, similar to other western realms, believed local and state government had been ineffective in combatting vice, crime, and corruption, which they rooted in racial and xenophobic conspiracies. Because of the power and autonomy of their grand dragons, the western Klan was able to place more Klan members in government positions across the region.⁴⁸

Where the Colorado Klan proved unusual was that by November 1924, its members dominated almost every level of government in the state. A groundswell of support for the Klan among white working- and middle-class Protestants translated to an overwhelming victory for the organization in state and local elections. The state’s two U.S. senators, its governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, state auditor, and attorney general, Denver’s mayor, a University of Colorado regent, four Denver district court judges, and a majority of the state legislature all were members in good standing of the KKK. Once seated in their new positions, the Klan-backed government made their presence known. Denver’s new mayor, Benjamin Stapleton, for example, appointed fellow Klan member William Candish as the new chief of police. Candish encouraged all of his Protestant officers to join the Klan by offering them perks and promotions. Conversely, all Jewish and Catholic officers were reassigned to work night shifts or take on other undesirable responsibilities. Candish ordered his men to enforce almost

⁴⁷ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8), 11.

⁴⁸ Western Realms that placed Klan members into numerous government positions include Washington, Oregon, California, and Texas. See Lay, *Invisible Empire in the West* (n. 8).

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forgotten city ordinances in order to harass non-Protestant and nonwhite business owners, including an old law that prohibited Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, and Black businesses from employing white women.⁴⁹

The Klan's victory in the 1924 elections gave the organization a powerful voice in local and state politics. Two of its key leaders, John Galen Locke and Minnie C. T. Love—both practicing physicians—ensured that significant attention was focused on public health, medicine, and reproductive surveillance. Dr. Locke, the grand dragon, was a homeopathic physician who shared a medical practice with his father in downtown Denver. Born in 1871, Locke attended Bellevue Medical College in New York City. In 1893 he moved to Denver, where he completed his medical degree at the Denver Homeopathic Medical College in 1904. Historians have argued that the Colorado medical community largely shunned Dr. Locke because of his homeopathic degree, and it was this marginalization that drove his quest for political power.⁵⁰ This claim, however, neglects the tenuous and shifting world of professional medicine in the turn-of-the-century United States.⁵¹ Dr. Locke was not admitted to the Colorado Medical Society, a group for “regular” practitioners, but the Denver homeopathic community was thriving during this period. Homeopaths in Denver had their own schools, their own medical society, and their own

⁴⁹ Phil Goodstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan: When the KKK Ruled Denver, 1920–1926* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2006); Griggs Riley, “Krazy Kool/Klean Kafe, box 2, FF37, SFP/DPL.

⁵⁰ Goodstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan* (n. 49); Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8); R. Todd Laugen, *The Gospel of Progressivism: Moral Reform and Labor War in Colorado, 1900–1930* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 163.

⁵¹ See Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy & Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Owen Whooley, *Knowledge in the Time of Cholera: The Struggle over American Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Antonovich, “Medical Frontiers” (n. 7).

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medical journal. Furthermore, homeopathic physicians like Locke and his father never wanted for patients, as many Coloradans were distrustful of regular physicians and disliked their harsh treatments.⁵²

Dr. Locke, in fact, enjoyed a prodigious medical career in Denver. Upon graduation, he taught obstetrics at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and held admitting privileges at the Denver Homeopathic Hospital, where he specialized in treating diseases of women and children. In 1909 he opened a joint medical practice with his father, while also working as the physician for the Denver Rescue Home of Women and Children. During the 1918 flu epidemic, Dr. Locke reportedly lost no patients and had a reputation for being especially skilled at treating pneumonia. By the time he emerged as the leader of the Colorado Klan in 1921, he had a large patient base and his waiting room was always full.⁵³

In the basement of the Locke and Locke medical office on 1345 Glenarm Place, two steel doors opened into the soundproof headquarters of the Colorado KKK. In the center of the room was a thronelike chair where Dr. Locke, flanked by bodyguards and two Great Danes, presided over Klan meetings from 1922 to 1926.⁵⁴ Described by some as a short, fat man with a Van Dyke beard, and by others as a “Buddha with a goatee,” Dr. Locke practiced an “ascetic lifestyle,”

⁵² By the 1920s, homeopathic physicians were largely folded into orthodox medicine and allowed to join all of Colorado’s medical organizations. Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 163; Antonovich, “Medical Frontiers” (n. 7), 51.

⁵³ Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1990); Goodstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan* (n. 49), 39–44.

⁵⁴ Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 163; Goodstein, *In the Shadow of the Klan* (n. 49), 39–44.

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renouncing sex and alcohol.⁵⁵ The grand dragon insisted that each Klan member adhere to a strict moral code. When an individual violated a rule, he meted out punishment as he saw fit—whether expelling members for moral turpitude, threatening men with vasectomies for illicit sexual encounters, or whipping Klan members for abusing their wives and children—Locke saw himself as the ultimate father figure of the Colorado Klan. It was his duty alone to enforce his vision of moral good.

While Dr. Locke presided over the Colorado Realm, another physician became the excellent commander of the women’s auxiliary chapter. Dr. Minnehaha Cecilia Tucker Love was born in 1856 in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and was matrilineally related to the Roosevelt family. Rather ironically, Dr. Love earned her medical degree from Howard University in 1887.⁵⁶ She briefly practiced in San Francisco before settling in Colorado in 1893. While practicing in Denver, the physician spent decades building up a strong résumé of government work. She served on Denver’s Board of Education, the State Board of Charities and Corrections, and the State Board of Health and became the first woman appointed to the State Board of Pardons. The press ordained her as Denver’s “Stormy Petrel”—a “handsome woman with a ringing voice and

⁵⁵ Griggs Riley, “Krazy Kool/Klean Kafe, box 2, FF37, SFP/DPL.

⁵⁶ Dr. Love was the only white person in her graduating class. Considering her future position in the WKKK, it seems strange that she began her medical career as a student at a historically Black college; however, women who wanted to become physicians had limited options for training. According to Morantz-Sanchez, in 1893 only 37 out of 105 medical schools accepted women. At the time, Love was living in Washington, D.C., and Howard would have been her only local option for medical school. Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy & Science* (n. 51), 245. See also Gloria Moldow, *Women Doctors in Gilded-Age Washington: Race, Gender, and Professionalization* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 37, and Charles and Minnie Love, Manuscript Collection, History Colorado, Denver, MSS 1233, box 1, FF146 (hereinafter CML/HC).

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a gift for sound logic, who could speak any cause she espoused to success and at the same time never failed to recognize the value of being completely feminine.”⁵⁷

In 1921, Dr. Love was elected as a Republican state legislator in Colorado’s General Assembly. After decades of political work, including suffrage activism and municipal reform, she promised to be a champion for the women and children of Colorado. During her first term in office, Dr. Love chaired the Committee on Medical Affairs and Public Health. She also introduced several bills, including legislation to create the Division of Maternity, Child Hygiene, and Public Health within the State Health Department; to provide examination and licensing of nurses; to establish a State Reformatory and Training School for Women; and to provide appropriation for the treatment and control of venereal disease.⁵⁸ By the time Dr. Love was up for reelection, her political agenda shifted. On July 16, 1924, three months before the election, Dr. Love paid five dollars for her white robe and hood and officially became “member no. 10108” of the Denver Women’s Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁹ Within a few short months, she would be promoted to excellent commander, the top female position in the organization.

With physicians in key leadership roles, the Klan turned its attention to medicine and public health. One early example occurred in 1922, in the aftermath of the great flu pandemic and in the midst of a smallpox epidemic in Denver. In February, William H. Sharpley, Denver’s manager of health and charity, made public a letter he received from the Klan, in which the

⁵⁷ “Dr. Minnie Love Dies after 10-Day Illness,” *Denver Post*, May 13, 1942.

⁵⁸ CML/HC MSS 1233, box 1, FF137; Mark James Connolly, “Public Health in 1920s Colorado: Health to Match Its Valleys” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1997), 52.

⁵⁹ Membership card file, box 37, SFP/DPL. Membership numbers do not correlate with the order women joined the organization or with how many women belonged to the organization.

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organization criticized city officials' handling of smallpox and influenza cases. "Because of the present epidemic . . . and the fact that many physicians are not reporting their cases," the Klan wrote, "a serious condition confronts the city." The letter goes on to suggest that the city impose mandatory social distancing policies until the outbreak ended: "With every wish to serve the public interest we would suggest that you forbid public gatherings of the masses in parks and places of amusement until the spread of the disease is no longer dangerous." The typewritten note had the Klan seal and embossment and was signed: "Very respectfully, The Invisible Empire. Knights of The Ku Klux Klan."⁶⁰ The letter, amiable in its suggestions, was nailed to the front door of Sharpley's home in the dead of night. The polite request with a menacing delivery demonstrates how Dr. Locke used the muscle of the Klan early in his tenure as grand dragon to advance his medical vision for the state. If there was any doubt about the intention of a midnight visit to the Sharpley home, a month prior, the Klan made a similar stop at the home of Ward Gash, a Black janitor the Klan accused of having "intimate relations with white women." In a letter pinned to his front door, Gash was ordered to leave town or face physical violence. The Klan threatened, "N*gger, do not look lightly upon this. Your hide is worth less to us than it is to you." Gash left town, but not before handing the letter over to the district attorney.⁶¹

The letter to Sharpley might be generously interpreted as a disturbingly delivered yet sensible appeal for public health measures, but the midnight visit had the ulterior motive of intimidating public health officials into either towing their ideological line or resigning their

⁶⁰ "Klan Would Rule Denver," *Herald Democrat*, February 27, 1922, 1.

⁶¹ Robert A. Goldberg, "Denver: Queen City of the Colorado Realm," in Lay, *Invisible Empire in the West* (n. 8); "Klan Would Rule Denver," *Herald Democrat*, February 27, 1922, 1.

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positions. The Colorado Klan, similar to other chapters across the country, desired institutional power to strengthen its own political machine. For example, when Denver proposed building a new hospital, the local Klan paper, the *Rocky Mountain American*, asked its readers to pressure the city to make sure the Klan had “some say about how it is run.”⁶² After the organization’s rise to power in the 1924 elections, Klan-friendly legislators immediately launched an attack on state institutions in order to bring them under control. In this effort, Dr. Locke found a strong ally in Dr. Love. Disbanding and then reestablishing medical and public health institutions with Klan members in leadership positions became one of her central goals after she was reelected to the General Assembly.⁶³ Although Dr. Love had spent over twenty years in Denver helping create the public health infrastructure of the city, by the 1920s racial purity moved to the center of her medical ideology, and she believed the Klan would more effectively support her racialized vision of public health in Colorado. During her second term, in collusion with Dr. Locke and other Klan legislators, she attempted to disband the State Board of Health, the Pure Food and Drug Commission, and the State Board of Charities. She also sponsored a bill to abolish the nursing licensure board, an organization she herself helped design during her first term.⁶⁴

The Klan’s attempt to disband the nursing licensure board is worth closer examination because it reveals how the organization used its political muscle to shape the medical landscape of the state. Dr. Locke expected Klan legislators to fall in line when voting on Klan-sponsored

⁶² “Some Timely Suggestions by an ‘Interesting Onlooker,’” *Rocky Mountain American*, May 29, 1925, 6.

⁶³ Gail M. Beaton, “The Literary Study and Philanthropic Work of Six Women’s Clubs in Denver, 1881–1945” (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1987), 98–104; Connolly, “Public Health in 1920s Colorado” (n. 58), 100–103.

⁶⁴ Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 163, 173–74.

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legislation. When representative Martha E. Long, a WKKK member, refused to vote for Dr. Love's bill to abolish the nursing board, she was forced to resign her Klan membership.⁶⁵ In a letter to the press, Long affirmed, "Yes, it is true that I was a member of the Klan and that my card of membership was taken because I did not vote for the nurses' bill. It is also true that they have been punishing me ever since." Long detailed the pressure the Klan put on her: "After the session opened, we were told that we had to follow the program. In fact, that was the order all the time." When the nursing bill came to the floor, a fellow Klan legislator handed Long a note: "Go straight down the line. No excuses taken." When Long refused, the Klan legislator informed her she could get out of the vote only if Dr. Locke gave permission. When she still refused, her membership card was ripped up and thrown on the floor in front of her.⁶⁶

The Politics of Reproductive Surveillance

As the Martha Long incident demonstrates, Dr. Locke expected full allegiance from Klan legislators. In addition to disbanding and replacing medical and public health organizations with Klan-friendly officials, Dr. Locke, with the assistance of Dr. Love, sought to focus the state's attention on the politics of reproductive surveillance. In 1925, Dr. Love introduced House Bill 369, intended to tighten Colorado's regulations on birth control.⁶⁷ That same year, she submitted

⁶⁵ Alva A. Swain, "Four Ladies Won Seats in Legislature," *Daily Sentinel*, November 20, 1926.

⁶⁶ "Woman Legislator Says Klan Tries to Control," *Routt County Sentinel*, March 6, 1925, 1.

⁶⁷ Robert Goldberg argues that Love's contraception bill was meant to "advocate" for contraception distribution in the state, and this was evidence of some of the more progressive impulses of the Klan. Goldberg cites Love's introduction of the bill (HB 369) from the House Journal of the General Assembly as evidence of this progressivism. Yet the House Journal's record of HB 369 never uses the word "advocate," instead Love uses the term "regulate." Given

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an article to the *American Social Hygiene Association* titled “Birth Control: Morally, Economically, and Racially.” Her writing provides strong, detailed evidence of her opposition to artificial birth control. Love began by denouncing birth control advocate Margaret Sanger and argued that readily available contraception threatened to corrupt the youth of America. As she moved through her essay, she refuted, point by point, neo-Malthusian fears of overpopulation. She then analyzed 1920s census data to argue that the biggest danger faced by Americans was not overpopulation but the decline among white Protestants, or what she called “revolutionary stock.” Love concluded the essay by presenting her legislative plan for Colorado. She called for policies that encouraged white Protestants to have bigger families and advocated for legislation limiting the procreation of the “unfit”—not through contraceptives but through sterilization.⁶⁸ Dr. Love introduced House Bill No. 60 later that year. A Bill for an Act to Prevent the Procreation of Idiots, Epileptics, Imbeciles, and Insane Persons would have authorized the state to forcibly sterilize the “unfit” housed in institutions across Colorado.⁶⁹

Many influential Klan members in the state had a long-standing interest in eugenic sterilization. Dr. Love expressed her support for the procedure as early as 1904 at the Colorado State Medical Society’s annual convention. In a paper titled “Criminal Abortion,” she argued

the short record of the bill, the ambiguity of the term “regulate,” and the absence of any other documentation of the failed legislation, Goldberg’s interpretation is understandable. However, paired with Love’s essay on birth control, written the same year she introduced the bill, a reinterpretation of the bill’s intent is warranted. This author contacted the Colorado State Archives for a copy of the bill, but the archivists could not locate it in their records. Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8), 81, 89.

⁶⁸ Minnie C. T. Love, “Birth Control: Morally, Economically, and Racially,” CML/HC, MSS 1233, box 1, FF151.

⁶⁹ Minnie C. T. Love, “House Bill No. 60,” CML/HC, MSS 1233, box 1, FF167.

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that the solution to abortion in the city was to educate middle-class women on the dangers and immorality of abortion, and to sterilize those deemed unfit to breed, presaging the first state sterilization law in Indiana by three years.⁷⁰ Another prominent Klan member, Royal Graham, the first judge in Colorado to join the KKK, garnered international attention in 1921 when he ordered the sterilization of Mrs. Clyde Cassidente. Denver welfare officials brought Mrs. Cassidente before the judge on charges of unsanitary conditions in her home. The judge, on the advice of a physician's testimony, ordered the woman to either submit to the operation or lose custody of her five children. The court order was the first of its kind and earned high praise among eugenicists across the country, although Graham later backed off his proposal after facing harsh criticism.⁷¹

Dr. Love and Judge Graham's efforts demonstrate how reproductive surveillance was embedded into the platform of the Colorado Klan, but this focus was not necessarily uniform in approach. Dr. Love opposed artificial contraception and despised Margaret Sanger, but other Klan physicians supported the birth control movement. Dr. May T. Bigelow, for example, sat on the National Council of the American Birth Control League, and Dr. Theresa Fantz was part of

⁷⁰ Minnie C. T. Love, "Criminal Abortion," *Colorado Med.* 1 (1903–4): 60; Alexandra Stern, "'We Cannot Make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow's Ear': Eugenics in the Hoosier Heartland," *Ind. Mag. Hist.* 103, no. 1 (2007): 3–38.

⁷¹ "Judge Royal Graham," *Calgary Herald*, December 14, 1921, 14; "A Vehement Protest Against the Attitude of the Denver Judge," *Oregon Daily Journal*, December 29, 1921, 8; "Vivisection and Motherhood," *Starry Cross* 30, no. 12 (December, 1921), 181; "Judge Graham Takes Gas Route," *Aspen Daily Times*, September 9, 1925, 1; "Little Ben Lindsey Gets Real 'Sassy,'" *Aspen Daily Times*, April 16, 1925, 1.

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Sanger's Endorsement Committee of 1,000.⁷² Dr. Bigelow, a fellow Klan legislator in the General Assembly, also unsuccessfully attempted to pass a eugenic marriage law.⁷³ For Drs. Fantz and Bigelow, these methods were a more pragmatic approach to curtailing the reproduction of the unfit rather than eugenic sterilization.

Reproductive surveillance may have been central to its medical politics, but as usual with the Klan, this ideology was tangled up with political maneuverings, personal vendettas, and professional power grabs. Perhaps the best example of the imbroglios of Klan physicians is the protracted feud between Drs. Love and Locke and Colorado juvenile court judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey. Judge Lindsey first achieved national prominence for his work with juvenile delinquents in Denver. For twenty-six years, Lindsey presided over the city's juvenile court, pioneering a compassionate approach to addressing the problem of delinquency.⁷⁴ Lindsey's juvenile court experiences not only taught him a great deal about the social effects of poverty, but also led him to develop radical views on a number of prevailing societal institutions. He openly advocated for women's access to birth control, arguing that poverty combined with large families contributed to delinquency and abortion. He later published *The Companionate*

⁷² "Committee of 1000," box 56, reel 36, Margaret Sanger Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷³ "Good Roads Bonds Lose in Colorado," *Salt Lake Herald Republican*, March 30, 1919, 54.

⁷⁴ On the career of Lindsey, see Charles Larsen, *The Good Fight: The Life and Times of Ben B. Lindsey* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972); Martin Joel Kretzmann, "The Kid's Judge: Institutional Innovation in the Early Denver Juvenile Court under Judge Ben B. Lindsey, 1901–1927" (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 1997); and Paul Colomy, "Projects and Institution Building: Judge Ben B. Lindsey and the Juvenile Court Movement," *Soc. Problems* 42, no. 2 (1995): 191–215.

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Marriage, a book in which he argued that marriage should not be patriarchal but should be sustained only by mutual respect and affection.⁷⁵

Lindsey was also a fierce opponent of political corruption and corporate greed. Beginning in 1909, he coauthored a series of articles for *Everybody's Magazine*, accusing Denver mayor Robert W. Speer, U.S. senator Simon Guggenheim, and other political figures of financially colluding with corporate interests, such as the Union Water Company and the Denver Tramway Company. Lindsey referred to this corrosive union between politics and business as “The Beast,” and when published as a book in 1910, *The Beast* was considered as important as Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, selling over half a million copies.⁷⁶ Lindsey’s views on Denver corruption garnered his fair share of enemies, and not everyone agreed with his progressive methods of juvenile reform. The roster of his opponents included some of the state’s most well-known politicians and business leaders; however, his most vocal critics were in the Ku Klux Klan. Not only did the Klan oppose his meddling in corporate interests, his progressive ideas on sex and reproduction became a particular target for the grand dragon, who argued that Lindsey ran an immoral court. The Klan accused the judge of leniency in juvenile rape cases, and in one incident, argued that he let a “negro rapist” go free.⁷⁷

As for Dr. Love, her opposition to Lindsey was not just political but also personal. In April 1920, Judge Lindsey sent thirteen-year-old Marguerite Boyd to see Dr. Love for a

⁷⁵ Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Companionate Marriage* (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City, 1927). See also Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105–77.

⁷⁶ Ben B. Lindsey and Harvey J. O'Higgins, *The Beast* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1909).

⁷⁷ “A Judge Encouraging Crime,” *Herald Democrat*, September 6, 1913; “Women Demand Lindsey’s Recall,” *Appeal*, July 4, 1914.

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gynecological exam as part of a juvenile court case. At some point during the procedure, Dr. Love invited male medical students into the room. Following the exam, Boyd told her court chaperone, Ruth Vincent, that she had been “very much embarrassed by the young men student doctors.” Lindsey, incensed by this report, admonished Dr. Love: “None of our girls would be sent to [you] if they had to be practiced on by male medical students.” Dr. Love was angry over Lindsey’s scolding, but conceded and promised never to repeat the practice. In a letter to Boyd’s mother, Lindsey said of Dr. Love, “If I offended her, I think I was justified in doing it.”⁷⁸

Seven months later, when Dr. Love was elected to her first term in the General Assembly, she threatened to vote against all Lindsey-sponsored legislation. Governor Shoup had appointed a committee of eight judges, including Lindsey, to work with the Colorado Federation of Women’s Clubs to recommend several bills to the legislature that focused on the protection of young girls and children.⁷⁹ “This woman doctor is now a member of the legislature,” Lindsey wrote. “And I have been told by a number of people that she is going to fight the juvenile legislation we are asking for . . . I do not know why this woman doctor should fight this legislation unless she is aggrieved at me because I entered a protest [against her].”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Letter to Minnie Love from Ben B. Lindsey, November 17, 1920, Letter to Minnie Love from Ben B. Lindsey, February 21, 1921, Letter to Hattie Boyd from Ben B. Lindsey, January 27, 1921, box 65, Ben B. Lindsey Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereinafter BBL/LOC).

⁷⁹ There were twelve bills recommended by Shoup’s joint task force, House Bill Nos. 130–42. *House Journal of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado*, 23rd session (Denver, Colo., 1921).

⁸⁰ Letter to Hattie Boyd from Ben B. Lindsey, January 27, 1921, box 65, BBL/LOC.

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In response to the rumors, Lindsey wrote directly to Dr. Love asking her to explain her opposition: “I never dreamed for a moment that any woman in the Legislature would oppose this program. . . . Again, my dear Dr. Love, I cannot see any more reason why you should oppose the legislation.”⁸¹ Lindsey then asked Dr. Love about another rumor he heard: that she also opposed his legislation because she believed the judge preferred to send delinquent girls to the Catholic-run House of the Good Shepherd, instead of the state industrial school. Contrary to these rumors, Lindsey assured Love that he sent only Catholics to the House of the Good Shepherd, or when prosecuting attorneys have no place else to hold Protestant delinquents. It would be another year until the KKK reared its ugly head in Colorado, yet this exchange between Love and Lindsey reveals the extent of anti-Catholic sentiment fomenting in the state, how physician-politicians like Love applied that xenophobia into public health policy, and how Judge Lindsey had already become a target for Love and other activists who would later align with the Klan.

Dr. Love’s feud with Judge Lindsey was also fueled by her growing displeasure with his stance on sexuality and reproductive medicine. She became increasingly infuriated with Lindsey’s support for artificial birth control and was particularly upset by his refusal to cooperate with a grand jury probe into abortion doctors. In 1923, a Denver grand jury convened to investigate the criminal practices of abortion doctors in the city. Lindsey defied the court order to disclose his contacts with working women who sought his council about unwanted pregnancies. Lindsey, in direct opposition to Dr. Love, had become increasingly militant in his support for birth control and working-class motherhood. The juvenile court judge threatened Love and other

⁸¹ Letter to Dr. Minnie Love from Ben B. Lindsey, February 21, 1921, box 65, BBL/LOC.

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Colorado legislators that he would open a birth control clinic under the auspices of his juvenile court if the state did not fund the recently passed Maternity Benefit Law, legislation designed to provide funds to working mothers.⁸² Lindsey even invited Margaret Sanger to Denver to speak, infuriating Dr. Love further.⁸³

By the 1924 election, Dr. Love and Dr. Locke, with the muscle of the Klan behind them, launched a full-throttled attempt to unseat Judge Lindsey. They handpicked Judge Royal Graham to run against Lindsey in his reelection bid. Dr. Locke believed Graham would fall in line with Klan directives, and Dr. Love believed that he would be an ally for her plan of passing a state sterilization law. As Lindsey later wrote, the Klan wanted “a clean man put on the bench of the Juvenile Court.”⁸⁴ During the campaign, Dr. Locke dispatched “hundreds of hoodlums” to Lindsey campaign stops to intimidate voters. At one such gathering, Klan members shouted down Lindsey, calling him a “dirty cur,” a slur meaning a mixed-breed dog. They also made anonymous threats to Lindsey over the telephone and in one incident burst into the judge’s courtroom shouting that Dr. Locke would “fix” him at the election.⁸⁵

Despite the intimidation tactics, Lindsey narrowly defeated Graham on election day. Graham and the Klan contested the results, alleging voter fraud in a predominately Jewish district in Denver. A Klan-dominated grand jury indicted precinct workers in the district for

⁸² Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 142–43.

⁸³ Dr. Minnie CT Love, “Birth Control: Morally, Economically, Racially” (manuscript), CML/HC, MSS 1233, box 1, FF151.

⁸⁴ Letter to Josephine Roche from Ben B. Lindsey, August 15, 1924, box 65, BBL/LOC.

⁸⁵ “Speakers Heckled in Denver When They Hit Klan,” *Fort Coloradoan*, October 30, 1924, 3; Lindsey and O’Higgins, *The Beast* (n. 76), xxiv; Ben B. Lindsey, “My Fight with the Ku Klux Klan,” *The Survey* 54, no. 5 (June 1, 1926): 271–74.

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ballot fraud, but a judge found no evidence and threw out the appeal.⁸⁶ Following Graham's defeat, Dr. Love and her Klan colleagues in the legislature attempted to abolish the juvenile court altogether and adjudicate juvenile cases in the criminal courts. After a large backlash from Lindsey's supporters, the legislature tabled the bill.⁸⁷

In the aftermath of the election, the feud between Locke and Lindsey took a bizarre turn. In January 1925, Klansmen forced their way into the Southard Hotel, kidnapped Keith Boehm, and drove him to Dr. Locke's office, where the physician forced the teenager to marry his pregnant girlfriend. Because Boehm was a minor, his parents sought an annulment through the juvenile court, presided over by none other than Judge Lindsey. After issuing an arrest warrant for Locke and his men, Lindsey ordered the defendants to furnish bonds in the sum of a thousand dollars. Locke brought in a Klan-friendly lawyer, who argued that Lindsey could not fairly adjudicate the case. Lindsey, citing his "stand on the Klan as citizen," granted a request for a change of venue.⁸⁸ Despite Lindsey's decision, the situation infuriated Locke, and the effort to malign the judge continued. The Klan newspaper *Rocky Mountain American* mocked him as "Little Judgelet B.B. (shot) Lindsey" and threatened that he would soon have to find a new career "in some other way than a political industry."⁸⁹ In a letter to Josephine Roche, Lindsey

⁸⁶ "Judge Lindsey Is Returned to Juvenile Bench," *Daily Sentinel*, November 21, 1924, 9; "Will Contest the Election Judge Lindsey," *Daily Sentinel*, November 28, 1924, 10; Larsen, *Good Fight* (n. 74), 192–96.

⁸⁷ Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 174–75.

⁸⁸ "Kidnapping Charges Filed Against Grand Dragon Following Forced Marriage," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, January 9, 1925, 1; Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8), 99.

⁸⁹ "Weeping Ben," *Rocky Mountain American*, February 13, 1925, 5; "Colorado Capital in the Dragon's Shadow," *Wausau Daily Herald*, February 24, 1925, 1.

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reported of the growing power of the organization: “The Ku Klux Klan are taking over everything here with the certainty of the stampede of the herd, and the uncertainty of what it is all about, and the indifference of ‘don’t give a damn’ what it is about so long as you can swat the Catholics, the Jews, or the Negroes.”⁹⁰

In a final twist in the Klan/Lindsey feud, in 1929 the Colorado Supreme Court disbarred Lindsey for receiving compensation for legal services rendered while serving as a judge. That same year, the court ruled in favor of Royal Graham’s appeal. By that time, however, judge Graham had committed suicide.⁹¹

The Decline of the Colorado KKK and the Legacy of Klan Medicine

The Klan’s attempt to bend the medical and public health bureaucracy to its will was largely unsuccessful, thanks to its brief and tenuous grip on Colorado politics. In the summer of 1925, when Dr. Locke faced federal investigation for tax evasion, the national Klan expelled him from the organization. Committed to maintaining his influential role in Colorado politics, Dr. Locke founded a rival group, the Minute Men of America. The WKKK also splintered in the aftermath of Locke’s expulsion, with Dr. Love leaving the organization to form the Minute Women of America. By the 1926 primaries, this infighting, as well as the small but steady opposition from anti-Klan activists, led to an overwhelming defeat for the white supremacist group at the ballot box.⁹²

⁹⁰ Letter to Josephine Roche from Ben B. Lindsey, August 15, 1924, box 68, BBL/LOC.

⁹¹ Lindsey was reinstated by the Colorado State Bar Association in 1935 after a court appeal. Larsen, *Good Fight* (n. 74), 194–97; Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 186.

⁹² Laugen, *Gospel of Progressivism* (n. 50), 176–78.

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In the two years the organization dominated Colorado government, Klan legislators introduced a total of 1,080 bills for consideration, including attempts to outlaw the use of sacramental wine, a proposal to fire all Catholics and Jews on the University of Colorado faculty, and a push to repeal Colorado's rarely enforced 1895 civil rights law. The majority of bills, however, focused on reforming the state's medical and public health legislation, including limiting contraception access, instituting eugenic sterilization, and abolishing then reinstating state boards and commissions with Klan members at the helm. Despite this impressive flurry of bills, the anti-Klan bloc in the Senate succeeded in killing most of the proposed legislation with procedural rules. In the end, the Colorado Klan succeeded in passing only two laws: one requiring all schools to fly the American flag, and the other making it a felony to own or operate a still.⁹³ Dr. Locke and Dr. Love's medical vision for the state ultimately failed to materialize, and by 1927 Colorado moved past its brief flirtation with a KKK-controlled state.

The implosion of the Colorado Klan coincided with a general decline in Klan membership in chapters across America over the next decade. Like the demise of the Colorado Realm, the ebbing of the national Klan had more to do with internal divisions and criminal behavior by its leaders than with any decrease in racist or xenophobic beliefs.⁹⁴ In 1939, facing increasing financial losses, Hiram Wesley Evans resigned his position as imperial wizard. Evans's successor was an Indiana veterinarian named James Colescott, and his second in command, Samuel Green, was a physician. Evans's successors underscore how medical

⁹³ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire* (n. 8), 88.

⁹⁴ In 1925, the Indiana grand dragon was convicted of the rape and murder of a white woman. Scholars point to this trial as a contributing factor that turned the tide of public opinion against the Klan. Blee, *Women of the Klan* (n. 8), 29.

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professionals continued to play key roles in the organization. In fact, Dr. Green, who eventually succeeded Colescott as imperial wizard, specialized in obstetrics—a salient reminder of the centrality of reproductive surveillance to white supremacy.⁹⁵

Although the second iteration of the Ku Klux Klan faded from national prominence by midcentury, at its zenith, the organization became a driving engine of racialized medicine. As eugenics gained a foothold in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, the Ku Klux Klan embraced the latest in scientific racism to lend legitimacy to their cultural, political, and economic goals of white supremacy. National leaders in the organization gave speeches and published books decrying what they perceived as the growing racial degeneration of the American populace. As Klan chapters formed across the country in the 1920s, Klan physicians and reformers, both men and women, folded these ideas into their medical and public health work. At the center of the Klan's medical politics was a specific attention to reproductive surveillance. The Klan, and specifically Klan physicians, became politically invested in the management of sexuality and the regulation of fertility. This was more than just an ideological project. Klan physicians used the growing influence of the organization to enforce a racialized medical hierarchy and to solidify their professional power.

Nowhere was the medical politics of the Klan more powerfully on display than in Colorado, where for a few brief years the organization controlled almost every level of government in the state. Eugenics and reproductive surveillance became a focal point for legislative and institutional reform, as John Galen Locke, Minnie Love, and other prominent

⁹⁵ David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 100–

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physicians gained leadership positions in the organization. These physicians attempted to use their roles as medical authorities and, in some cases, government officials to enforce white supremacist tenets of health and welfare, oversee reproductive rights and restrictions, and reorganize institutions to align the power of the state behind Klan goals. Although the vigilante violence that marked the post-Civil War Klan continued with the second generation of the organization, the work of Drs. Locke and Love shows how the new Klan believed that medicine and government could work in tandem to police and punish bodies without resorting to the extralegal actions of mob justice.

The medical politics of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s also offers a compelling warning for contemporary Americans on the lingering legacy of white supremacy in the practice of medicine and the politics of public health. Far from being a relic of the past, medical racism, eugenic thinking, and reproductive surveillance continue to invade the medico-political landscape in the United States, often under the guise of scientific objectivity and moralized health care. Additionally, white supremacist organizations continue to flourish in this country, with physicians and other health care providers likely among their membership ranks. Without a deep interrogation of the historical relationship between white supremacy and the profession of medicine, physicians and politicians risk a further entrenchment of systemic racism and reproductive surveillance in medical practice and public health policy.

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